The Black Cat

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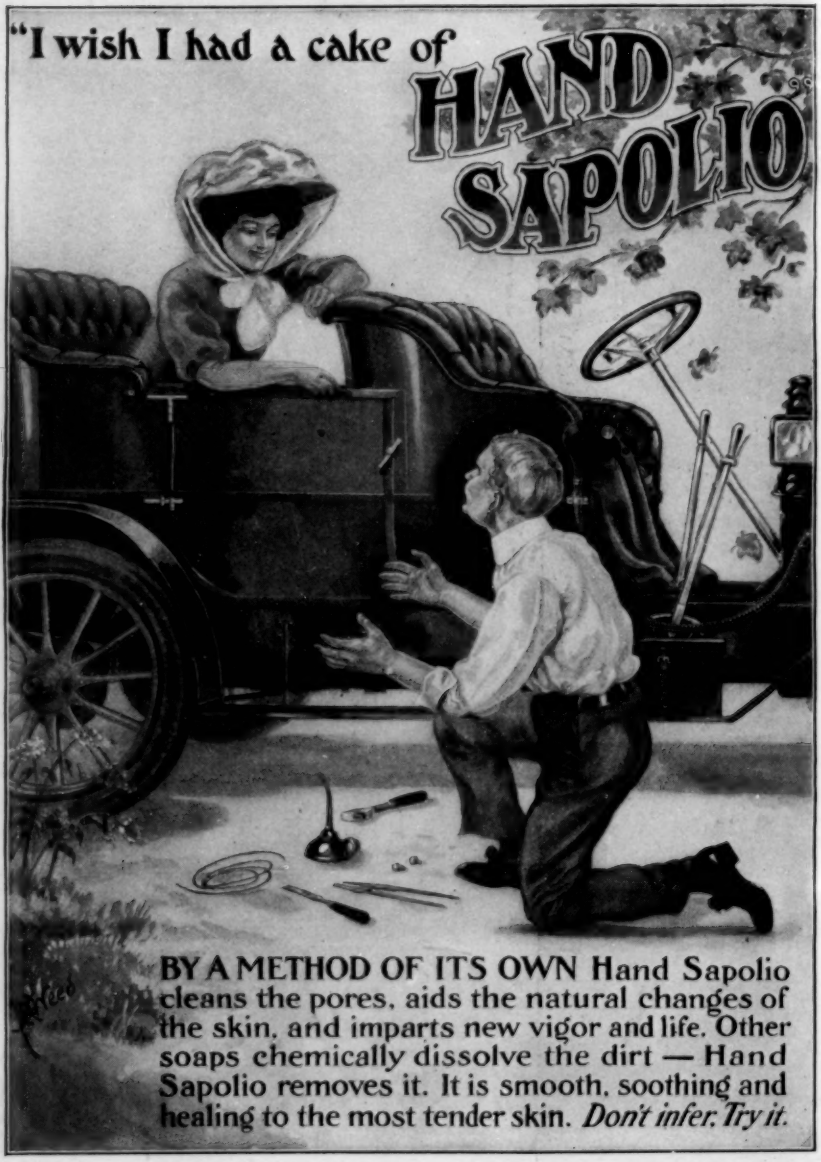

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The Black Cat

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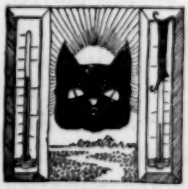
Just Like That.*

BY MARION HILL.



HAD a partner, down that way — Arizona way — he's down there yet. I came back east. He'll never come back east. He's planted.

I hadn't any business out there; none at all. Hadn't any business being sheriff, either; but that was the boys' doings, not mine. Once they run you for sheriff you might as well run; you have a better idea all 'round of where you'll stop. And when you know *that*, you last longer. Some folks don't last ten minutes out there. But those ten are lively; yes, they're lively. No; I'd no business out there. It's noisy and I'm getting old. I'm going on thirty-eight. 'Tis no place for old folks. The spryer you are down there, the better able you'll be to come away when you get the notion. Look at my partner. He's down there yet.

I wasn't looking for him when I found him. I was looking for somebody else; looking for a black-haired, black-hearted, black-horned goat of a horse-thief called Mr. Simonson. He took a kind of fancy to be called "Mr." We humored him. What's the use spilling your own blood for a man who wants to be called "Mr."?

I'd ridden after him quite a handful of weeks. And when

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I got to Sobbing Creek Camp (the creek "gug-guggles," you know, just like that) why, I thought I'd quit for a few months. So I hunted for the bar. The notice over the door said, *No admittance except on business. Keep out. This means you,* so I went right in. Folks think I'm brave and nervy, but I'm not; only contrary. Contrariness is braver in one day than pluck is in a year.

It was good and warm inside and sociable, too, for the folks already there; but none too sociable for callers. They wouldn't look at me. For one thing, they were all pretty busy playing keno; and a sociable-minded keno player might 's well go out with his nurse and roll a hoop, for all the winnings he'd get. No; you can't be sociable and play keno. So of course I waited. But even *that* irritated 'em. 'T wasn't their fault: 'twas the game. It's that kind. A fellow can sit in hell's kitchen playing poker with the devil for his soul and keep cool and happy. But keno's excitable. The name does it. Call it *Lotto* and it's nothing but a peaceful kind of a jingle-in-a-box that you buy for the young ones at Christmas and they sit around for a few days plunking bits of glass down on numbers till they get so tired of the simple-tude of it that they give it away to the Salvation Army man when he comes around for cast-off toys that wouldn't stand the strain. That's Lotto. But call it keno and the simple-tude falls out of it with a thump to jar the seismograph in Washington; yes, and the Salvation Army better not touch it till they climb a-top of insulating stools and draw on rubber gloves. That's keno.

To play one card's bad enough, but all these fellows were playing three and some seven. Takes skill to play seven? No; takes money, though. Yes, and takes some buttons, too. And takes a load of room, — spread all over the table. There wasn't any room for me. And it hurt my feelings. When my feelings get hurt I'm contrarier than the tariff. So when the man at the bar got through (he was playing the wheel, but it really wasn't a wheel, — he was only picking each die out of a cigar box, groaning forth the number and then stacking them up, tens, twenties, thirties, — just like that) so, as I said, when he got through, I told him what I'd take and how much.

"Fifty-two!" he said. 'Course he wasn't calling a bellboy. He was commencing another game.

"No; only one, — to start on," I said, not loud but *plenty*.

Then some one — I know now it was my partner, but didn't know then; first time you cut into a bunch, you can't tell Little Casino from Big, not right off — some one said:

"Is the gentleman asking for *that?*" And a shot took the cork out of a bottle sitting close beside me.

Did I stand for it? 'Course I stood for it. Before I could have pulled my gun I'd have been lying down for it. For keeps.

"Or that?" went on the same voice. And a cork on the other side of me splugged loose.

"You quit," I said, steady. "You make me nervous."

"Fool idea to get nervous before a shot touches you," remarked the voice, very pleasant. A pleasant voice sends an awful chill down your back at a time like that.

"What chance would I have to get nervous afterwards?" I asked.

Then some one else said that sauce only went good with cold meat, and I guess I was pretty near dead. There was a high old scrimmage and one shot that wasn't meant for a cork. But my partner, laughing fit to kill, jogged the shooter's arm. The bullet splintered up the keno box. We didn't play any more that night.

"He may have news from home and sister," said my partner. Then to me, "Speak."

So I spoke: I told the barkeeper what I'd take and how much.

That started my partner laughing again. He laughed easy.

"You're mirthfuller alive than dead," he said. "Perhaps I made no mistake preservin' you."

Still being a little nervous, I tried to thank him.

"Whoo! make a noise like a sunset and fade away," he said. Just like that. Never looked at me.

Then I told him, convincing-like, that I intended to make a noise like a sunrise and keep on a-coming. Then he looked.

"Want to mosey into camp, Sunrise?" he asked.

I said I didn't mind. And we were partners.

You see, it turned out it wasn't keno that made them unsoci-

able, but an opal-lode. They had uncovered an opal-lode and were getting out some mighty pretty stones. Though some said they weren't opals at all, not being in slaggy quartz, but in a kind of stuff like petrified wood. They looked like fire opals, anyway, and they sold for 'em ; so what matter's the geologic name? Nothing.

The reason why the boys acted unfriendly-like to me at first was they were afraid I might be some sort of a representative of the real owners of the property where the opals were thickest. For Arizona's getting to be as tied up as New York. It doesn't look that way, but it is. If you want to locate the owner of nobody's land, just find something valuable on it, that's all.

But the right or wrong of this opal deal didn't worry me a little bit, not a little bit. I jumped in, joyous.

There weren't so many of the boys: only Canada John, Frisco John, Manuel Mendoza and Divvy Dave. "Divvy" was my partner. They called him Divvy because he always had enough of everything for two; never had just enough for himself. Even when he had nothing, he divided it as free and hearty as if it were gold mines.

"Mosey into camp, Sunrise," was all he said. But it made me part owner of the whole he had, shack, bunk and grub-stake.

He had indecent yellow hair. And he had brown eyes that didn't go well with it. They went fine by themselves though. He had all-right eyes, had Divvy. Any piece of him that you looked at by itself was all right, but when you put him together he didn't fit.

When you saw him *going,* back view, you thought he was a splendid appearing man; but *coming* he wasn't all you'd like him to be; — particularly if things had gone wrong with him. And when they went wrong he sang; which is the worst sign there is — Christian scientists to the contrary.

Ever unearth opals? They're pretty. They mostly stick tight and are apt to splinter to flinders when you pry them loose, but sometimes you find them rolling around in a groove as free as eggs in a nest. Pretty! you can't tell! We'd pick up a few as soft and shining and polished as if in a bit of velvet in a jeweler's vest pocket. And we sold them as fast as we found

them. Sounds kind of untruthful — to sell opals in a desert where nobody lived ; but we did. You know Bagdad ? They call it a station stop. But 'taint a station; it's only a place on the track. All the passenger trains hike off on a spur, this side of Bagdad, and wait. Waiting for a Santa Fe is as uncertain as salvation. Must be as lonesome, too, to judge from the disconsolate way the tourists hang on to the car steps, hopping off and on again to limber themselves, but not daring to walk about knowing there'll be no dinner horn to round them in when the engine takes a notion to start.

We sold these tourists all we could find. We could have found more if we'd had the proper mining outfit, but we had to mine on the quiet, not desirous of having our proceedings become wide and circumambient. Still we did well. It was a poor day when we didn't clean up some thirty dobys apiece.

I only intended to hang around a day or so, having my own business to look after, but I got gay with an axe one evening and swung it down on my ankle. Feels foolish to chop into yourself. It displeased me so I fainted.

Divvy picked me up and carried me home to the shack. I've been carried before, but never that way. Divvy carried me like I was *folks*. His folks. And he was laughing fit to kill.

" Sunrise," he said, " if you aren't more careful you'll get careless. You make me tired."

Just like that. But he put me easy on the bunk and cut the shoe off and strapped up the gap and got supper, and then laughed and told yarns till I dropped to sleep; for it was hurting pretty bad.

He said it was such a good axe that he couldn't account for the blood-poisoning, for, come a few days, that's what followed. Arizona's a great spot for buzzards. They're always wheeling in the sky. Somebody 'd tipped them the wink that I was booked to go, for they sailed around over the shack, patient as could be. A sick buzzard's put to death by the well ones, so they say, it's all the aid to the injured they know; and in desert places it's just about the same with humans. Your friends don't put you to death; no; but they don't sit up nights to hinder you from dying. They play keno. It takes their mind off the funeral.

But Divvy didn't play keno. He rode twenty-seven miles for a doctor who couldn't come, but who sent some stuff to pour into the cut that frothed like a soda-fountain. It hurt and I yelled.

"Keep on yelling, Sunrise," said Divvy. "It steadies my hand."

And he'd pour ahead. Yes, Sir; he cared for me, just like that, for near a month. He knew I'd get well; except for one night when he asked if I'd like to see a woman, — sort of to take my last words, though he didn't put it that way.

"Now, what woman's around?" I asked, cross. For I didn't know of any.

"There's Mendoza's girl, Lissie."

"What do I want Lissie Mendoza for? she's nothing but a kid!" I yipped.

"Kid? H'm," said Divvy. But he saw I wanted calming, not upsetting, so he considerately cut out the woman idea and 'tended me, thorough, himself.

When he saw his duty he did it, whether he hankered for it or not, so that night he landed down on his knees and prayed quite wonderful. All the church words were there, but not in their right places, and a whole lot got in that hadn't seen church in a coon's age.

It interested me so I grew better. He was terrible ashamed of his proficiency and he got fearful profane explaining to me how it was. I blew on my fingers and jerked out the least hot words and set 'em up to cool and found out from 'em that Divvy said his prayers every night because he had promised his mother. He wasn't the sort of man who'd ever seemed to have had a mother; you know what I mean.

Yes, I got well. And I had a lot of money to my credit that I hadn't started with. For Divvy had sold my opals for me and had kept the money separate. And he had paid for the doctor and medicines out of his own share; not mine.

"What for?" I complained. Didn't seem honest for a fellow to be so square. "What for?"

"Why did I use *my* money, Sunrise? Why, because you're *my* partner."

And I was so mad and so weak and so obliged that I rolled

over on the bunk and cried out loud, sort of pleased with myself to think I could sniff and carry on.

"Now you're through," said Divvy, "I want to tell you something pretty good."

He had a piece of it in his hand. It was the most wonderful opal in the world, big as a blackberry, shooting red and blue fire worse than Fourth of July.

"And it's only the 'scout,'" he said, excitedly.

We'd found out that the richest opals in a vein were likely to be bunched altogether, with a few scattered in advance as a sample of what was coming. These we called "scouts." If the scout was good the rest were better.

And this scout — Lord!

"I'm ready," I said, struggling up.

Divvy laughed and shoved me back on the bunk. "No hurry, Sunrise; I've kept the thing dark for weeks, so you can get in on it; a few days more won't hurt."

That's the sort of a partner he was; not doing half, but doing all. It's the only partnership that lasts, — an unequal partnership, one person doing it all. Where partners give equally, they get to scrapping over a shade more or less and the thing breaks up. I tried to do my share; yes, I did. But every time I set out to get something needed, I met Divvy toting it back.

Yet he wasn't good; no, he wasn't. He was bad. You could see it in his face. You could hear it in his voice. You could get it from his laugh. But the word "partner" meant heaps to him.

Well, in a few nights we were out after the rest of the opals. Divvy had tracked the lode to a kind of a hilly hummock in the woods. You never 'd call them "woods" in the east. Just post-oak. You could fling your socks over the top of them. Sobbing Creek trickled along through the middle of them. It was a boomer in the rainy season, but it just was no bigger than a leak from a dipper, these days, wandering lost-like down a river bed wide enough for the Missouri. Yet the sob was there all right. Gug-gug-guggling, like a whipped baby under the bed-clothes.

Queer how the stars hang down in Arizona. There's no

house to measure them against, and they seem to bulge right out of the sky and get in the way of your eye-lashes.

Through the woods there ran a ridge for which there wasn't any reason except opals, — at least that's how Divvy had figured it out, and that he was right was proved by the "scout."

The other boys in? You can bet not. And no tourist was going to buy *this* find. Divvy and I were going to trek for the east with our haul and live high.

So we were mighty quiet in those woods, especially when we started to mine-in. That's why the voice surprised us.

"You sha'n't touch this hummock of earth."

It sounded odd, coming in a woman's voice, out of the night.

She stepped into the open where it was as plain as day. Mendoza's girl, Lissie. She had a pale little face not much bigger than a soup-cracker, and her mouth was a red line. But she was pretty; yes, she was pretty. Her eyes made her pretty; they were sort of burning.

"You sha'n't touch it," she said. Just like that.

Before she knew what was next, Divvy laughed, moved up to her and kissed her.

For generally when a girl's star-gazing, that's what she's out for, whether she owns up or not.

But Lissie Mendoza wasn't. And she struck like a young rattlesnake, blind but true, her hand ringing loud against Divvy's cheek.

"You sha'n't disturb this earth," she said.

Divvy looked at her hard, his temper rising. And the temper of a yellow-haired man who laughs easy is the worst kind. "Where I'm slapped I kiss twice," he said. Just like that. Low and cold.

"Not me," she said. And we saw she had a gun. It was a sure-enough one, not a lady's pocket-toy to go "Pht!" and be done with it, but a 'live gun. And she handled it fine.

"You sha'n't touch this earth." She'd forgotten the kissing and the slapping. The hummock was the thing.

"I could shoot a woman easy as I could shoot a man," said Divvy. And looking at him I saw he could.

But she shot first.

No, she didn't hit him, far as I c'd see. And that's all the bullet she had.

"Now you get away," he said, training his gun on her.

"Well shoot," she said, daring him.

"I'm going to," he said.

When she saw he *was,* she tried the first thing last, — same as they always do.

"Dave," she whispered. "Don't for God's sake dig up this earth, for there's a grave in it."

He lowered his gun.

"Whose grave?"

"My little baby's."

"Come on home, Sunrise," he said. For she had her face in her hands.

And there Lissie's baby sleeps; all ribbed 'round with opals fit for a king.

We hiked for the sound of the gug-gug-guggling, the shortest way out of the woods. But Liss followed us a piece and said things.

That's all I have against a woman, — it never does to give in to them, or forgive them. Forgive a man who's standing with one foot on your corn and he'll apologize and step off; but forgive a woman for the same thing and she'll put her other foot down. It don't do to forgive a woman. It's mighty near as bad as letting her forgive you; but not quite.

"Now you know," said Lissie, between her teeth, her poor little red mouth shut tight. "And I hate you for knowing. And I curse you for a murderer and a horse-thief."

That's what she said.

She had it all her own way; nobody answered back. So she turned home after a spell.

Divvy and I walked down the dry bed of Sobbing Creek.

"Divvy," said I, some later. "Murderer's not so bad; but why did you let her call you a horse-thief?"

He stood still; but I went on a bit before knowing it. When I turned we were rather apart.

"Have you bluffed or have I?" he asked. "Didn't you know it?"

"Know what?"

"I'm Simonson."

Shucks; that reminded me of a lot of things. The deputy had been sheriff-ing so brisk and happy that I'd let him be at it.

Simonson, — cut-throat, thief, jail-bird.

We didn't say a word, nor make a move; but Trouble trembled up around us like smoke; and that gug-gug got on my nerves. I brushed the stars off my eyelashes.

"Then you're my prisoner," I said.

Divvy laughed.

I thought it was my duty to take him. A man can be more kinds of a beast doing his duty than the good Lord 'll ever forgive him for.

So I started for Divvy.

"Draw your gun, you big coward," I yelled, for I thought he was going to play for sympathy by keeping his hands still.

He smiled and reached. When Divvy reached it was time to shoot. So I shot and he fell.

When I got to him his hands were empty. He hadn't tried to draw.

I lifted his head on my arm.

"Divvy," I groaned. "I thought you were going to shoot. Honest. Why didn't you? Oh, why didn't you?"

He sort of laughed — in my face.

"Why, you're my partner, Sunrise," he said. "That's why." Just like that.

Then he died. I'd killed him. I didn't remember in time that *he* was *my* partner.

But I've remembered straight along since.

A Balanced Confession.*

BY CLIFFORD HOWARD.

BOB Dutton stood at his office window, looking down upon the street. He had fallen into the habit of doing this each day about the noon hour. Sometimes he stood there for five minutes; sometimes a half hour or more. The length of his stay depended wholly upon *Her*. As soon as She appeared within the doorway of the big building across the street he would hurry down and betake himself to the little café around the corner, where he was always particular to get a seat from which he could gaze at Her as he ate his sandwich and pretended to read the paper. In his heart he called her Violet. What her name really was he did not know; but she was Violet to him. No other name so truly expressed her loveliness and gentle personality. Who she was or what she did or where she came from — these were all enigmas to Bob. He had tried in several tentative ways to solve them, but without success. Yet to be in her presence once a day and feast his eyes and his thoughts upon her as she sipped her coffee and nibbled as a dainty bird at her biscuit and marmalade, was a present joy of so serene a quality as largely to temper his longing for joys yet unpossessed.

To-day the big hand of the tower clock in the next square had already marked off fifteen minutes after the hour, and She had not yet come. The other faces and forms upon the crowded street were as mere phantoms to his centered gaze of watchfulness for the one reality. But now, of a sudden, amid the throng of hurrying men and women, a familiar figure diverted him. A tall, broad-shouldered man was coming down the opposite side of the street — his brother Tom.

Bob was proud of Tom; proud of his appearance, proud of his

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accomplishments, proud of his successes. And yet, sincere as was his pride in his brother, it was ofttimes tinged with envy; a mild rebellion against the fate that seemed so often to hand the blossom to Tom and give to himself but empty stalk and leaves. Tom was provokingly fortunate. Success gravitated to him. Where Bob was obliged to dig and thump, Tom but held out his hand. Bob had been making an effort during the past year to get into politics as a complement to his budding law practice; but so far no one but himself appeared to know it. Tom, on the other hand, had political honors and rewards thrust upon him. Only a week ago he had been tendered a commission from Washington for some special work on behalf of the Interior Department, and was to leave for the West this very afternoon at Government expense and a golden *per diem*.

As Bob watched him swinging along he could not but marvel that he and his brother were so frequently mistaken for each other. To him the differences between them were as marked as those between a mud fence and a hawthorn hedge. To be sure, they were of the same height and of the same general build, but aside from that Tom was a year older and better looking and had blue eyes and lighter hair, and dear knows what else to distinguish him from Bob; and yet time and again even their mutual acquaintances had been deceived; a state of affairs which Bob affirmed only went to prove that the average human being is near-sighted.

A sudden faint scream rose above the hum of the street; there was a prancing of horse's hoofs and a shout of men's voices. Bob had taken his eyes from his brother for only an instant; but in that instant Tom had sprung from the curb and grabbed the head of a runaway grocer's horse, and just in time to save a young woman who had stepped out hurriedly from the sidewalk. Even as it was, however, one of the wagon shafts grazed her shoulder and caused her to lose her balance and fall to the pavement. She was up in a moment, however, with the ready assistance of two or three men, while Tom, turning over the captured animal to a policeman, picked up her purse and restored it to her, and in another moment she had disappeared across the street and the little drama was over.

It was She, his Violet! Bob's eyes were big with excitement. Had she been hurt? What an awfully narrow escape it was! Why had not he, — he who devoted all his spare time to thinking of her — why had not he been on hand to rescue her? What an opportunity had been his to learn who she was; to win her esteem and gratitude; to leap the barrier that so long had kept him from her! But, of course, as usual, the luck was not his, but Tom's! And what did this radiant luck mean to Tom? Nothing!

Bob clapped on his hat and strode across the room to the door. As he opened it Tom walked in.

"Hello there, Bob," he greeted; "I'm just in time! Come and have lunch with me. My last day at home, you know."

Bob knew that Tom would not patronize the little café around the corner, and there, alas, lay his heart and his appetite. Nevertheless, he accepted his brother's invitation with a commendable show of grace. "But see here, Tom," he added, as they passed out and walked over to the elevator, "what sort of exhibitions are you giving on the street, stopping runaway horses? But say, honest, Tom, that was a plucky bit of work, all right."

"And so you caught me at it, did you?" returned Tom, clapping his hand on Bob's shoulder. "It wasn't anything, so far as I'm concerned; but did you see what a close shave that girl had?"

"Did I! Another second that fool horse would have killed her! And who is she, Tom? What's her name?"

"Blessed if I know. I'd never seen her before."

"Humph! Didn't think to ask her her name or find out from somebody who she was?"

"No; why should I? It's nothing to me who she is. I'd have done the same thing for a beggar."

Bob hid his exasperation in a noisy striking of a match for his cigarette. "But, by jove, Tom!" he persisted, "didn't you see how pretty she was? Why, there isn't another girl in town like her!"

"You don't tell me," retorted Tom, good-naturedly; "and where did you find that out?"

"Oh, well," squirmed Bob, "you see, I have noticed her several times before; happened to have seen her occasionally at the little café where I get my lunch, and she just sort of struck my fancy,

you know; that's all. — *Going down!* Come on, Tom, here's our car."

In Bob's mail the next morning was a little note, on blue paper and exhaling the faintest trace of violet perfume. It was the first thing he opened, and for a half hour afterwards he forgot that there was any other mail to be looked at. He re-read the note at least a dozen times; for which, however, there was no business necessity, as it was not only very short, but likewise very clear and comprehensible:

MISS JULIA HASTINGS
Miniatures
Studio, 910 Hoe Building

Miss Hastings desires to express to Mr. Robert Dutton her deep appreciation of the service he so bravely rendered her in the accident which threatened her yesterday afternoon.

If there was any disappointment in the discovery that her name was not Violet, it was more than balanced by the delight of this communication from her. His opportunity to make her acquaintance had come at last; and with it all was the seductive appeal to his masculine pride in the realization that the addressing of this note to him indicated that she knew who he was. Perhaps she had noticed him at the café; and perhaps, also, his interest in her for the past three weeks had been reciprocated all this time. Bob was decidedly romantic for a level-headed lawyer.

But — and here was the thorn beneath the rose — he had no moral right to presume upon the opportunity which this note from her opened for him. He had no right to this expression of gratitude. She had mistaken Tom for him. Clearly, it was his duty to forward the note to Tom and remain silent. But he wanted the note himself; and he wanted her gratitude. It was no fault of his that he, instead of Tom, had not been on hand to help her. And what would Tom care for this precious little note? Without meaning any disrespect to Tom, he could not but feel that to give it to him would be as the casting of pearls before bacon.

The argument with his conscience had not yet been settled when he followed Her to lunch. He must have his coffee before deciding. But it was chance, and not coffee, that decided him. He and She came up to the door of the café at precisely the same

moment. Her eyes met his. There was a sympathetic exchange of glances. He raised his hat; she held out her hand.

"Mr. Dutton," she said with unaffected frankness, "permit me to thank you in person for —"

"Please don't mention it," protested Bob; "I — I — that is, you see, it was only — I received your note this morning. Permit me," and he took her parasol, which had awkwardly refused to close for her, and brought it shut after a moment's work with it.

"Thank you very much," she said, sweetly. "I ought to have it fixed; it has acted that way several times lately," and as she spoke she entered the door and Bob followed.

Naturally, Bob took his place at the same table with her; and at this lunch were laid the foundations of a companionship that developed and flourished with all the speed and joy of a predestined affinity.

Beginning with their noon meetings at the lunch table, Bob quickly passed from a probationary acquaintance to an accepted friend of Miss Hastings, and was soon a welcome visitor to her studio as well as to the home of her aunt Matilda, with whom she lived. And the more Bob saw of her, the more thoroughly was he convinced that she of all women in the world or anywhere else was the only one to make him truly and completely happy for the balance of his mortal years.

But ever in the bright heaven of his new-found life there loomed a thunderous cloud. He had not told her of her mistake. Time and again he had gone to her primed for confession, but in her presence he had each time shrunk from the ordeal. He admitted frankly to himself that he was a coward. He could not but feel that the readiness with which she had accepted him as her friend had been inspired by his supposed act of heroism on her behalf. And therefore it was, for fear of losing the coveted opportunity which had thus come to him, that he had not spoken at once, but had allowed his conscience to slip, with the argument that it would have proved embarrassing to her to have been thus at once told of her mistake. But at the same time he had been quick to promise himself that he would surely tell her at some opportune time. Yet the opportune time seemed never to arrive. If now she had learned to care for him — as he devoutly believed

she did — apart from all consideration of the circumstance that had brought them together, he feared to contemplate what might be her judgment of him for having so long permitted her to rest under a delusion. And the longer he deferred the confession the more difficult and more portentous it became. On several occasions he really did grow bold enough to seek to steer the conversation back to the day of their meeting, in the desperate hope of finding an easy and casual outlet to his secret; but with a perversity that mocked his every effort she invariably failed to respond to his leadings.

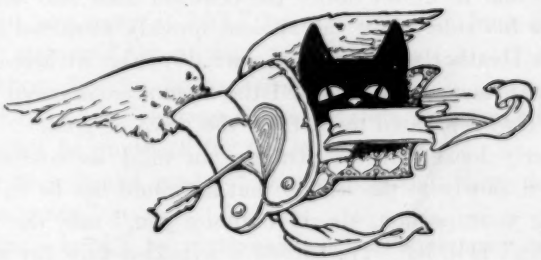
If his avowal of love and the offer of his hand and prospective fortune were not forthcoming as soon as might have been expected from the intensity of his devotion, it was solely because of the bugaboo that lurked in his conscience. He had allowed their friendship to flourish under false colors, but an engagement — never! If she accepted him it must be with a full knowledge of the deception he had practised upon her; it must be only with her complete forgiveness and absolution. And as she had become each day more necessary to his happiness, and as the month of June was now simply aglow with love and inspiration, the time had finally come to decide his fate. He would tell her! tell her of his love and of his deception; lay bare his baseness and lay bare his exalted affection. And if she spurned him, there would be nothing left for him to do but to give up his law practice, give up everything, and go to Patagonia, in the fervent hope that he might be eaten alive; while if she forgave him and accepted him, he would live in Paradise and pray for the years of Methuselah.

It was a balmy, moonlit evening. They were drifting idly down the river in his boat; she, silent and pensive; he, nervous and thrilled and striving unsuccessfully to still the thumping of his pulse.

"Julia," he began abruptly, "I have something I want to say to you; that is, I want to tell you something. You know I love you, Julia! You are the only —"

Julia clasped her hands with sudden earnestness and leaned toward him. "Oh, please don't, Mr. Dutton!" she cried, interrupting him without ceremony; "please don't! — that is, not until

you hear what I have to say: I am not the girl you think I am. I have deceived you, basely deceived you! It was not I you saved from being run over that day. It was my sister, my twin sister Juliet. She had stopped in to see me that day on her way back to New York. I did not go to lunch as usual as I was to meet her again an hour later at the depot restaurant. I was standing at my studio window and saw her narrow escape. If it had not been for you she would surely have been killed. I was frightened nearly to death; but Juliet took it all as a joke and would not listen to me when I told her she ought at least to send you some word of thanks; and so — and so I wrote the note myself, for her; and when I found that you thought it was I you had rescued, I — I — well, I didn't have the courage to undeceive you, because — because I —" and here Julia broke down and sniffled; to which outburst Bob responded by laughing outrageously, and seizing the oars he put the boat in shore toward a mossy bank.



Peter Brown's Medal.*

BY CLARENCE L. HAY.

EATHERLY, waiting for his car, stepped back near the window of a pawnbroker's establishment, and the glint of the precious stones displayed under the electric light attracted his attention. Moving slowly along the sidewalk he glanced carelessly at the rows of unredeemed jewelry pledges, but near the centre of the window he stopped and adjusted his glasses. A gold medal in a little black case was placed close to the glass, and Heatherly bent his head to read the words engraved upon it. The inscription ran:

This medal was presented to Peter Brown, who by his heroic conduct saved the lives of five persons in the East River, New York, on the night of November 15, 1889.

"Poor devil," muttered Heatherly. "It must have jerked his heartstrings to part with a token like that."

He straightened himself up, but his gaze was still upon the medal, so that he didn't notice the bent old man who had stepped quietly to his side. But the ancient quickly attracted his attention. As Heatherly stared at the window, the withered hand of the old man moved forward and the fingers commenced to stroke the glass that separated them from the piece of gold.

Heatherly looked at the stranger in mild astonishment, and then edged slowly to the left so that he would not be in the way.

"I beg your pardon, sir, if I annoy you," said the old man, "but I can't help it." He turned a wrinkled face for a moment towards Heatherly, wiped a tear away with the back of his hand, and then edging along till he was directly in front of the medal he continued to stroke the plate-glass front.

Heatherly was interested. "What's the trouble?" he queried.

The ancient looked at his questioner for a moment, then nod-

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ding his head towards the piece of gold he said simply: "It's mine, captain, that's all that's the matter. My name is Brown with a Peter tied in front of it." He stammered out the latter portion of the information as if ashamed to acknowledge his name under the circumstances, and Heatherly was touched.

"You don't mean to say that you — well, that's hard luck."

Peter Brown's wrinkled right hand continued to stroke the glass, and as Heatherly watched the pathetic action, he noticed that the medal, unlike the other articles, was unticketed.

"Is it for sale?" he asked.

"No, no!" stammered the old man, agitated over the very mention of a sale, "I only pawned it yesterday, but I asked this pawnbroker to put it where I could see it and — and stroke it, and he did. He was the only one who would do it, bless his heart."

"And you saved five people?" said Heatherly.

The old man drew himself erect. "Yes, sir," he answered, proudly, "twenty years come next November. I was a bit younger then, sir, and it was a little easier to get a living in New York than it is to-day." While he spoke the old fingers still moved slowly up and down on the glass.

Heatherly was silent. The car that he had been waiting for went clanging by, but he made no effort to hail it.

"What did you pawn it for?" he asked, after a long silence.

"Bread," answered the ancient promptly.

"Yes, I know, but for how much?"

"Three dollars, sir," answered the veteran, and fumbling in his inner pocket he produced the ticket.

Heatherly took it and read: "One gold medal, three dollars: interest nine cents."

"Well, that's hard," he muttered. "That's damned hard!" He suddenly pulled his wallet from his pocket and took out four single bills. "Here, Brown, old man," he cried excitedly, "we're going to pull that little badge of yours out of slavery. No, never mind thanking me, go in and get it."

With his face beaming with pleasure the old man took the money, and inside two minutes returned with the medal in one hand and the change in the other.

Heatherly waved the money aside, but he took the medal

affectionately in his hand and re-read the inscription it bore.

"Old man," he said, placing his hand on the hero's shoulder "I wish I owned that! Don't pawn it again. Here's my card; come down there to-morrow and I'll find some light work for you." He shook the withered hand of Peter Brown and dashed towards a car that was nearing the corner.

Heatherly was anxious next day. Peter Brown did not come to the office. On his way home he wondered if the pawnbroker knew the address of his customer, and he decided to call and ask. As he stepped towards the door his eye glanced again along the rows of rings, and he stopped suddenly. *Peter Brown's medal occupied its old position in the window!*

"De address of de man who pawned de medal?" repeated the pawnbroker when Heatherly questioned him. "No, sir, I cannot tell you dat, but he comes here efry day."

"Every day!" cried Heatherly.

"Yes, sir; he is a funny fellow, an' he takes de medal out efry day an' den he pawns it again. He is wery careful of it, an' as he is a wery goot gustomer I oblige him by putting it in de vindow so dat he can see it efry time he go by. I vos tink him crazy; he haf pawned it twenty times!"

Heatherly thanked the pawnbroker and stepped outside. "The old scoundrel, I'd give a ten-dollar bill to get my hands on him!"

He stood staring at the medal for a few minutes, then he glanced down the street. Coming straight towards him was the hero of the East River!

But Peter Brown's memory was as bright as his inventive faculties. When he caught sight of Heatherly's face he turned and fled, dodging and ducking behind trucks and cars in a way that soon left his pursuer far behind.

The "Peter Brown medal" was never redeemed by its artful owner, but every time Heatherly passes a pawnshop he wonders if the wrinkled ancient is still playing his game under another name in a different part of the city.

The Woman in the Case.*

BY WILLIAM J. LAMPTON.

E were trekking last summer across the Wyoming plains, from the new town of Shoshone to the southern entrance of Yellowstone Park, a distance of two hundred miles or so, "according to how we went." Of ten men in the party, seven were rather tenderfooted and so forth, and, to that sort of person, a day's journey on a hard-hitting cow-pony makes the camping hour the best ever. Then is the time when the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest, and after the evening meal the camp-fire is renewed to blaze and crackle, everybody lights his pipe and somebody tells a story before beginning the easier travel to the Land of Nod.

One evening, up on the Big Wind river, where it begins to get closer to the mountains and the grazing is sweet to the tooth of stock, we had settled down to the usual thing and as a preliminary, Johnson, a round-the-world newspaper correspondent, told a harmless tale of political and social intrigue in the Philippines.

"It don't much matter what's doing," remarked Jim Wizner, our combined teamster and cook, "you'll always find there's a woman in the case."

"And why not?" inquired Chief Joe Breckons. "The first that ever was had a woman in it and that one set the pegs for posterity. Now if Eve——"

"Chestnut," interrupted Ed Vreeland, a Sunday-school scholar from Cheyenne.

"I guess we all know that story," ventured Percy Hoyt, a veteran plainsman, "but maybe Wizner's is newer and better. How is it, Jim?"

"Well, it's newer," Jim admitted modestly, "because it happened several years after Eve hit the Devil's apple-cart. If you

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want to hear it, I'm willing, though I wasn't expecting to butt in with any of my yarns."

Unanimous consent was given promptly and Jim, having stirred the fire till it roared in protest, fixed himself comfortably against a bag of oats for a sofa cushion.

"It happened right here on the Big Wind," he said, "and about eleven years ago. Half a dozen of us cow-punchers had a big bunch of cattle to look after and we didn't have much peace of mind or rest of body, owing to a lot of rustlers that thought cattle was common property and took their share whenever they could find the chance. Our gang hadn't been very accommodating, except with cold lead, and there was a grave or two to our credit and no tombstones up. But we didn't mind that so long as there was proper fillin' in the graves, and gents, there was." Jim was modest, but he appreciated a good thing when he told it.

"In consequence thereof, as you might say," he continued, "the rustlers had it in for our combination, of which we was well aware and acted according. One day after we had done a sight of trying to round up our bunch of cows which had been raided the week before, I was left to watch a hundred head or so we had brought in, while the other men went off to find the balance. I was dead tired and along early in the afternoon while the cattle was grazing quiet and the siesta season seemed to be about due, I curled up in the shade of a friendly cottonwood and snoozed like a baby. It was the first good one I'd had for a week and I was getting all there was in it. How long I slept I don't know, but after a bit I was brought to by feeling somebody shaking me as if there was a fire in the house."

"'Hello, hello,' says I, sitting up sudden and reaching for my gun, which wasn't where it ought to have been."

"'Hello yourself,' says a big husky duffer, tapping me on the top with a pistol. 'Get up; it's time for breakfast,' and he laughed as though it was a joke. Maybe it was, for the breakfast I'd been getting up to lately wasn't hardly enough to justify very early rising. I was rubbing my eyes trying to get them plumb open when he yanked me up on my feet and I come to enough to take notice. I didn't know the duffer from Adam's off ox, but he seemed to know me and acted as if he was glad to see me. He was

a good-looker and didn't have the style of a man that had been raised a cowboy. I sized him up for an eastern chap that hadn't come West to grow up with the country because he wanted to, and also that he wasn't calling on me to get better acquainted and be friendly. There was a little wiry cuss with him that wouldn't weigh more than ninety pounds, but looked handy to have around to do the dirty work. He didn't have anything to say, leaving the big one to carry on the conversation and arrange the preliminaries, as you might say. They had with them a boy that hung back holding their horses, and he looked like he hadn't washed his face for a month and was otherwise imposed on. That was the lay-out before me, and somehow or other I felt they was no friends of mine, even if the big one hadn't waked me up with that gun of his. My mother used to wake me up with her slipper, but that was different. I knowed she meant all right.

"'What the —,' I started in to say when I got my tongue loose enough to say what I meant, but the big fellow stuck his pistol in my mouth and closed the opening.

"'None of your d— profanity around here,' says he, fierce; 'we won't stand for it. We have other things to say more to the point. You don't know us, but we know you and we want to talk business. We had not expected to find you, but it is always the unexpected that happens and you happened in our way just when we needed you. I am sorry to have disturbed your repose, but I waked you up to settle with you before our departure.'

"'I don't owe you nothing,' says I, reaching for my gun as a matter of habit. He noticed the move and pointing his pistol towards mine that was laying on the ground about six feet away, smiled as he nodded his head in its direction. I seen it laying there plain enough, but I didn't reach for it.

"'But we owe something to you, Mr. James Wizner,' he says, polite as a basket of chips. 'We owe you a token of our esteem for what you and your friends have done to us.'

"'Oh, you're some of them d— cattle stealers, are you?' says I, tumbling all at once to the situation.

"'Don't be so free with your language,' says he, fingering his gun, 'or I may be tempted to change our program.'

"'What's your program?' says I, bold enough, for I guessed

what was in for me, and I knowed there wasn't anything for me but to bluff.

"'Well,' says he, slow and deliberate, like a judge talking, 'while you were reposing peacefully beneath the shade of the cottonwood, we conferred together and concluded that the time had come for us to make an example of you that would, we hoped, be long remembered by your friends on this range and others. Ordinary killing was too good for you, or any one like you, so we determined to do you up in a dramatic, not to say melodramatic, manner. Unfortunately we have no red lights or other stage effects, but we have the talent and that will make up for the lacking accessories. Theatrical performances do not usually open with prayer, but if you wish to pray before the performance begins, no objections will be entered provided you make it brief, because we have very little time to waste.'

"It wasn't very clear what they intended to do to me, but I didn't feel as much like praying as swearing, and I begun the performance with a string of oaths that sounded like sulphur and smelled like brimstone. I knowed I had no more show than a lamb in Wall Street, but I made up my mind to go into the game with my fists and have it over with quick. I pulled myself together for the plunge, but just as I moved, the big one nodded to the little cuss standing to one side and before I could raise a hand the rope shot through the air, dropped over my arms and I was laid out flat on my back. That little cuss could handle the lasso, and no mistake. The big one laughed, kicked me a hunch or two to show how glad he was, and began to tie me up like a bag of rags. I didn't see any use in being so dern particular and swore about it, but he swiped me across the mouth with his dirty paw and kept on tying. He finished the job to his liking more than to mine, for he laughed and I didn't, and set down to enjoy the prospect. I started into cussin' some more.

"'Stop it,' says he, 'or I'll fill your wicked mouth with grass, as the Lord did unto Nebuchadnezzar.'

"I'm no steer that likes grass, so I shut up and began to figger on what was coming next. I thought maybe they'd roast me over a slow fire, or hang me up alive in the cottonwood for the eagles to feed on when I was palatable, as you might say, but that wasn't

it. The big one told the little cuss and the boy to bring up the other properties and let the show go on. They rode down to the willows by the river and come back shortly with the wildest, ugliest steer I had in the bunch. I'd tethered him down there to keep him around the neighborhood, and they had found him while they was looking for the others. He was a son of a gun from Bull Creek and he had horns on him seven feet in the clear. He had white in his eye and had a way of shaking his tail like an Irishman twirling a shillalah. What part that d— steer was billed for I couldn't understand, and I was that curious I mighty near forgot I was expected to be the star. But I wasn't asking any questions.

"'To instruct you more fully in the business of this play,' says the big one, noticing that I was anxious to learn, 'I may tell you that you are billed to appear as Mazeppa in the most thrilling act of that famous melodrama.'

"'Who the h—'s Mazep?' says I, blurting it right out.

"'Oh, you'll learn all about it before the curtain rings down,' says he, going over to the others with the steer.

"They couldn't get within twenty feet of the brute, and finally they had to rope and throw him. Then the two men come back to me.

"'This is your final opportunity to pray,' says the big one, sounding as solemn as a theological seminary.

"What I said didn't sound much like prayers, and the two of them picked me up like a dressed hog and toted me over to the steer, which wasn't enjoying the festivities any more than I was, from the signs he was making. But they wasn't counting on our feelings at all, and, by heck, in about a minute they had chucked me on top of the steer and was tying me to his back and side. The part I was to play showed up plain enough now and I begun to think that no matter how well I done it, I wasn't going to be in no condition to enjoy the applause at the end. But I didn't let up on telling them what I thought of them.

"'Your language,' says the big one at one time when I was doing my best, 'is almost a substitute for red lights. Please continue it.'

"I didn't need any invitation like that, but while I was at it,

I was watching the boy. All the time they was tying me up he had been moving round kind of anxious-like about something or other, not noticed by the other two busy looking after me, and I seen him pick up my pistol where the big fellow had kicked it out of my reach and hide it in his shirt. You might think I had something else to think about, but when a man gets right up close to the end of his string his senses seem to get sharper and he don't miss much of anything he ain't likely ever to see any more. Somehow I felt sorry for the boy, he looked so lonesome and dirty, and I hoped he'd get away with the gun and sell it for enough to buy a bath with anyhow. By and by they got through with me and throwed the ropes off of the steer, getting out of the way themselves mighty quick. As soon as the steer felt he was free, he come to his feet with a jar that I thought would shake the bones out of my body, and stood trembling. I had busted enough broncos to know how he was feeling with that strange load on his back, and I wondered if he would buck and jolt the life out of me, or just run for it till he fell down and rolled over on me. The prospect wasn't pleasing, either way. He wasn't acting the way the two men thought he would act, either. There was a cliff about a hundred feet high, half a mile down the river, and they had meant he should run for that and go over it. It was losing a big steer, all except the hide and taller, but what did they care for a steer if they could make an example of me? Not any. Besides, it was my steer. Anyway, he stood there in a tremble and they begun to yell at him and shoot their guns to stampede him good. He got the stampede all right, but instead of making for the cliff he ducked straight for the two men that hadn't treated him fair, and the next minute he had shoved his long horn clean through the body of the little cuss and slung him twenty feet in the air, shaking his head hard to get him off of his horn. That was some satisfaction to me and I felt friendlier towards that steer than I ever had in my life, but my feelings underwent a change the next minute, for he spun round and headed straight for the cliff. As he whirled I heard a pistol crack and thought the big one was shooting at the steer, but he missed him if he did, for the brute kept on and I begun to lose hope and forgot to swear. I was tied on face up and could see back towards the starting place, and though I was losing

my senses pretty fast, I got a glimpse of the boy jumping on one of the horses he had been holding. The big duffer I couldn't see and supposed that he was coming up on the other side to be on hand for the last act. The next thing I knowed clear, the boy was riding lickety-split alongside of the steer next to me. By cripes, he could ride and he had a good horse. It kind of hurt me to see him there, because I had thought maybe he wasn't so anxious as the others to get rid of me. And he seemed to be mighty anxious, for he rode as close to me as he could get. I wanted to let him have a few final warm words, but I was too far gone and had to take it out in thinking. When he got close enough to touch me he held up his hand as if he wanted me to keep still. But I wasn't making any fuss that I remember.

"'Don't lose your head,' he shouted. 'I'm going to shoot the steer. You watch out and keep ready and I'll cut the ropes so's you can get loose before he rolls over on you.'

"I guess I must have nodded that I understood, for he dropped back about ten feet and I heard a pistol crack and the steer went down on the side away from me. The boy had shot him in the off hind leg, and he went down on that side after about two more lame jumps. Quick as a flash the kid had cut the ropes and dragged me out of harm's way. How he ever done the job ain't for me to say, but it was done and I wasn't going over that cliff, anyhow. But me and the steer dropped within fifty feet of the edge. That was the time when I fainted. As an emotional actor, as you might say, I was doing my part in great shape. When I opened my eyes in the next act the boy was chucking water in my face from his hat. After a bit I pulled myself together enough to ask where I was at and what had become of the big fellow. You see, he was on my nerves and I wanted to know what his future arrangements with me might be. The boy didn't say anything, but started back to the cottonwood and I followed. When we got there the big one was laying out dead enough to be safe and the little cuss was still where the steer had left him.

"'What done it?' says I, nodding towards the big one and feeling relieved in my feelings.

"'I did,' says the boy, smiling as if he was real happy over something well done, 'and with your gun.'

"'It was you that shot when the steer turned, was it?' says I, not altogether straight in my mind yet about what had happened.

"'Yes,' says he, 'and I never thought I'd get the chance. I owed it to him, but I'm sorry for the other one. He wasn't so bad.'

"'Charge that part to the steer,' says I, laughing, for I was feeling a good deal better than I had been since I waked up.

"The boy didn't notice what I said, but went over and stood looking at the big feller stretched on the ground. After a minute he rubbed his fist in his eyes and went and set down by the little cuss's remains. It wasn't none of my business, and I didn't mix in, but I wondered some what he was thinking about.

"Well, to make a long tale short without the use of a knife," concluded Wizner, "the boy told me the story of his life while we was digging a fair sort of a grave with accommodations for two, and after the funeral obsequies, as you might say, I turned over to him all the effects, live stock, money, watches and jewelry of the deceased, and that same night he put out for the nearest railroad station about a hundred miles to the south and that was the end of him."

"But where's the woman in the case?" inquired Tom Dawson, who might have been a lawyer.

Jim laughed and knocked the fire into a brighter blaze.

"She was there, all right," he said. "The boy wasn't a boy at all, and the big feller got what he deserved, not counting what he done to me."

Her Best Room.*

BY JOSEPH NOEL.

RS. JUDSON stood with her ear against the door of the room from which the doleful sounds were coming.

"My God," filtered through the panels, "My God, am I getting them again?" Then followed the noise of some one turning over in bed.

Mrs. Judson, lamp in hand, her face wearing a look of anxiety and fear, retained the position of a listener. She knew that the cries would be repeated; they always were.

Every night but three since she had started the boarding house at No. 4927 Castro Street, an undertaking made necessary by the death of her husband after passing through bankruptcy, she had kept these vigils. The three nights she missed were when the room was vacant.

It was her best room, and when anyone of appearance indicating an occupation above mere manual labor called in answer to her advertisement, there was much laudation of its many advantages of isolation at the end of the hall; southern exposure; open fireplace and patent folding bed, which made it possible for one to have a combination parlor and bedroom.

The first occupant was a weather-beaten sea captain who had been brought into the port of San Francisco on one of the China Mail steamers, after losing his own vessel in a typhoon and spending eight weeks in an open boat. Rumor had it that the occupants of the boat had been reduced to starvation and that one man less was taken aboard the mail steamer than escaped from the doomed "Isabeletta." Something that may have contributed to the support of the rumor was the captain's habit of stealing furtive glances over his shoulder every few minutes and side-stepping as if to avoid a blow from behind.

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Mrs. Judson noticed these peculiarities, but put them down to St. Vitus dance or some other physical short-coming.

Twelve o'clock was just striking the first night her new boarder occupied the room, when an unearthly yell rang through the house. Hastily throwing a cloak over her shoulders, she ran along the hall. A thread of light came from beneath the captain's door; none of the other boarders appeared to be stirring.

After listening intently for a few seconds she detected a sound not unlike someone asking questions in a gasping, breathless fashion. Presently this stopped and the thread of light disappeared. Midnight silence fell on the house again, but only for a few minutes. When she was about to withdraw, the creaking noise that accompanies the turning of a person in bed fell on her ears, followed immediately by a cry that was even more blood curdling than the first. Mrs. Judson was no longer in doubt. The unearthly noise came from the captain's room.

Her first impulse was to knock at the door and demand an explanation. Not knowing what fearful object she might encounter caused her to hesitate. Placing her ear to the keyhole, she listened. The gasping, breathless questions were being repeated, with, if anything, greater intensity than before. Then came sounds indicating that the captain was getting out of bed. Presently the thread of light under the door reappeared. Hours passed, to the waiting woman centuries, and a constant swish, swish, like the beat of waves against the shore at low tide, set her nerves on edge. She was tempted to rouse the other boarders — to cry aloud. Not till the gray dawn was stealing among the chimney tops of the Mission did she associate the teasing madness with the dragging of the captain's slippers as he walked up and down the floor.

At breakfast she narrowly watched her new boarder when the conversation turned on cats and their night noises, and saw him blush under the tan of exposure. It was evident that he wanted to say something, but held himself in check. He lingered over his coffee till the others were gone, then clearing his throat and keeping his eye firmly fastened on the bottom of the cup, he asked in a halting way if the cats had annoyed her.

"Yes," snapped out Mrs. Judson, as if the question was one

she had been waiting for, "the *cat* did annoy me, and I know what cat it was. I won't stand it if I hear it again."

"Very well," said the captain, glancing hastily over his shoulder and jerking his chair down towards the foot of the table, "very well. I agree with you that they are awful. I don't like them myself." Then after a pause, as if making up his mind to something. "I think I'll go back to the sea. They come — it comes, you know," glancing quickly over his shoulder again. "It comes more here than anywhere. You see, it's my head. Yes, just as I got to sleep it woke me up and turned me completely over. Yes, completely over. There wasn't any use of my trying to sleep."

He put down the cup and paused again as if waiting for an answer. Mrs. Judson kept her eye on him. She thought she had some sort of a maniac to deal with, and the closing of the street door on the laziest of her boarders gave her an uncomfortable feeling. "Completely over," the captain began again, when she failed to respond. "Just as if I was a little child. It never came that way before."

"When are you going away?" questioned Mrs. Judson, at last.

"Right now," answered the sailor, giving a final hasty glance over his shoulder and side stepping towards the door.

A thin, nervous little book-keeper, who came on the recommendation of a friend of her more prosperous days, was the next occupant of the best room. Mrs. Judson was looking over her possessions preparatory to retiring the first night the book-keeper was in the house, when a crash that made her heart stand still came from upstairs. Instinctively she went to the room at the end of the hall. No thread of light came from under the door, but moans filled with fear and pain greeted her. There was no hesitation this time. She knocked boldly.

"What do you want?" came from the other side, in a high pitched, nervous voice.

"Are you sick?" she asked.

"No."

"Then what's the matter?"

"Nothing; leave me alone."

But she did not leave, and at regular intervals the moans, filled

with fear and pain, lower, more subdued than at first, fell on her listening ears.

Money enough to pay for the damage done, together with a note stating that the table had been accidentally upset and the lamp broken, was found by Mrs. Judson when she could no longer endure the suspense of the book-keeper's non-appearance, and visited the room after dinner the next day. Although she made enquiries of the friend that had recommended him, she was unable to get an explanation of her boarder's actions. She also failed to learn when or how he had left the house.

Now she pressed her ear against the door and listened to the terrified complaints and promises of reformation by the third occupant of the best room.

"My God," repeated the voice, when the process of turning over in bed was completed, "My God, they're coming back again. If I live till morning I'll take the 'cure.'"

It was with many misgivings that Mrs. Judson had let the room for the third time. The newcomer was a stout, red-faced commercial traveler, anxious for a quiet place to rest.

Every evidence that his acquaintance with wine was more intimate than merely looking on it when it was red, could be seen in his indecision, even in trifles, the speckled puffs under his eyes, and the nervous twitchings of his mouth. To hold him if possible longer in the room than the first two occupants, she demanded payment for a month in advance, which demand was met with the same general air of uncertainty that characterized his every act.

Despite the feeling of security that possessed her when she thought of the rapidly approaching rent day, her heart sank when she heard the new boarder mount the stairs after supper.

Somewhere in the background of consciousness, the thought lingered that responsibility for the cries of pain and the moans of terror lay not with the occupants of the room, but with the room itself. If not, why the coincidence of two suffering in succession? She could not wash the dishes nor perform her other duties about the house, so anxious was she to see if the coincidence would extend to a third occupant. And it did. For five nights she listened to the commercial traveler foreswear the seductive cup; then she returned him his money and asked him to go.

There was now no doubt in her mind. The room was possessed of something uncanny. With care she pieced together the fragments of a story she had gathered, at first half-unconsciously, from the occupants of the room, and found that an intangible visitor came at regular intervals and turned them completely over in bed. There was no noise, no excitement — only an apparent prejudice on the part of the unseen power against a person sleeping too long on one side. This was her secret. To save the reputation of the house and retain her other boarders she shared it with no one.

Fortunately, she had little fear of the supernatural. The only change in her mode of living was an avoidance of the room at the end of the hall. She decided that it should not be let again, and yet within a month it had an occupant.

Mrs. Judson was in the Mershan Furniture Store paying a delayed instalment on her furniture, when the proprietor asked her if she would not take one of his employees to board out the rest of the bill.

"I can keep it out of his wages, Mrs. Judson," he said, "and it will be a sight easier on you."

She hesitated a second, and was on the point of saying that she had no room vacant, when her best paying and most faithful boarder came forward and was greeted by Mr. Mershan like an old friend. There was a short discussion of the question, and Mrs. Judson retired with her best room pledged to the chief salesman of the company. She thought it meant exposure either way, and adopted what appeared to her the easier. An accidental word dropped by her best paying and most faithful boarder would have put her in a false light if she had said the room was occupied. That the room *was* occupied she was firmly convinced, but how could she explain it without jeopardizing her means of earning a living? On the other hand there was a chance. She would not admit to herself what the chance was, and merely waited.

Preparations were made for the nightly vigils near the door of the best room. She was determined to save as much from the wreck, if wreck there should be, as she could.

When the salesman retired the first night, there was the usual sound of a person turning or being turned in bed, a hasty scramble over the floor, the striking of a match and the appearance of a

thread of light under the door. Following this came a flood of boisterous laughter and the turning of wheels, not unlike the winding of an old-fashioned clock. The light disappeared and smothered chuckles took the place of the laughter. Mrs. Judson was more fearful than on any former occasion. The scramble over the floor, the turning of wheels, the laughter and chuckles all pointed to one thing. Insanity! The new boarder had encountered the unseen power, and it had unhinged his reason.

What was this nightly visitant that affected in a different way every one coming in contact with it? What would be her share of the responsibility for the loss of the salesman's reason, the now thoroughly frightened woman questioned herself. She could endure no more. With a cry that reverberated through the house, she began hammering on the doors of the sleeping boarders.

"Get up," she called through the keyholes, "get up. There is a mad man in the large room."

Immediately there was a procession of half-clad figures along the hall.

"Treat him gently," she pleaded, with tears in her voice, when they were gathered about the door. "I am responsible for his condition."

The boarders looked at one another in a puzzled way, then one of them knocked loudly.

"Heigh, in there," he shouted, "You'd better come out quietly and we won't hurt you."

"What's the matter?" yelled the salesman.

"Oh, please come out peacefully," pleaded Mrs. Judson through the keyhole. "I'm to blame for it all. I should have told you; I should not have given you the room."

By this time the new boarder was well enough dressed to stick his head and shoulders out of the door.

"Are you fellows crazy?" he began, "or is this the way you always go on here in the middle of the night?"

"You seem to have recovered," broke in Mrs. Judson, with something like a sigh of relief. "You appear to be all right now."

"All right? I should hope I am, and able to take care of myself, too," answered the new boarder, with a menacing look at the half-clad figures huddled together in the hall.

"But you were laughing and going on so," persisted Mrs. Judson.

"Laughing and going on?"

"Yes," continued the woman, "you are the fourth affected in that or some similar way by sleeping in that room. What is it that comes? What is it that turns every one sleeping here completely over every few minutes?"

For answer there was such a paroxysm of laughter by the furniture store employee that the boarders got on the defensive. Mrs. Judson's jaw fell.

"I see it all now," gasped the salesman. "It is too good, too good. Come in." And he threw the door open to the wall. They followed him into the room, keeping close to one another for protection.

"See," he went on, crossing towards the bed, "this is the cause of it all," and he pulled the mattress out on the floor.

"We made this bed for an old customer, Mr. Towrey, who suffered from locomotor ataxia and some lung trouble. The lung trouble made it necessary for him to be turned over at regular intervals during the night; every half hour, I think. The locomotor ataxia, by depriving him of control of his muscles, made it impossible for him to turn. He invented this bed to do the turning. This is the arrangement," and he set the wheels going that were ingeniously hidden among the springs. "It was wound up ready for action when I lay down on it tonight."

"Did they dare sell me a second-hand bed at your store?" snapped out Mrs. Judson, her fear giving way to anger.

"No, it was never used. Mr. Towrey died the day the bed was finished."

A Curious Incident.*

BY LESLIE DARE.

CHANCE brought together three friends of college days after long years of separation.

The host of the occasion was in his own home, a handsome residence in an Eastern city. During the interval before dinner they sat in comfortable and luxurious intimacy over their cocktails, in an interchange of confidence, incident or experience with the light and genial touch of a conversation occasionally running into spontaneous and witty generalities.

It was Burton who finally held the inquiring attention of the others by a recital that wore the charm of mystery, and by implication, a betrayal of a tendency to mysticism, since he rejected the practical solution suggested by one of his listeners. This brought upon him the veiled but none the less effective ridicule of his friend, and some discussion among all three.

Burton, while listening to the others, idly occupied himself with a portfolio near at hand, and for the moment scanned critically a drawing which arrested his attention. The subject was not unusual, but a nameless subtlety in treatment impressed him as novel and striking in effect — even masterly.

The subject was a young mother with the face of a virgin, and a child which she seemed to be attracting toward her by the partial display of a virginal bosom. How this idea of virginal beauty was conveyed to him he could not define. He was about to remark the incongruity when his host's voice claimed his attention, to the exclusion of the picture, and, closing the portfolio, he confined his attention to the subject still under discussion.

To his surprise, his host, hitherto non-committal, now seemed inclined to support his own position. He was saying, a little nervously:

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"But for a curious incident in my own life, I doubtless, like you, should be wholly skeptical. While not actually offering an explanation, I may yet suggest that certain well attested experiences imply to me at least the existence of laws of mind and spirit not yet understood, but which a fuller development of faculty will grasp and explain upon perfectly natural lines, but which, until understood, will be classed as supernatural or as occult mysteries.

"Some years ago, in my capacity of civil engineer, I was in the far West. By the way, I have a folio of drawings of odd characters and landscape bits which possibly may interest you. Western scenery is wonderfully attractive, and I never wholly abandoned my sketching habit."

While speaking he had crossed the room and had taken up the folio, from which he abstracted a couple of drawings which he slid into an open drawer, and then, returning, made a general display of its contents. Resuming his seat he continued:

"It was once our good fortune to 'put up' for a time at a house that was singularly romantic and picturesque in its situation, environment and isolation. Only the urgency of our need and the fact that it was nightfall procured for us the privilege of temporary accommodations. Though satisfied as to our credentials, our host remained for a time courteously distant, and I regretted the intrusion which circumstances compelled. Nevertheless, it chanced that I and my assistant remained several weeks. Originally Eastern people, they possessed a degree of cultivation and there was a most excellent library in the house.

"It is with their eldest daughter that my story concerns itself particularly. From the moment that her singularly tranquil and candid eyes looked into mine, a most extraordinary life began for me. It is perhaps impossible for me to explain precisely what the effect was. Understand me, however, it was not of love, nor emotion, nor anything that I can name.

"What occurs to defective sight when for the first time suitable glasses are adjusted to the eyes, now occurred to my mental vision. My whole nature, indeed, was suddenly supplemented by a new and tranquil force which seemed to possess me. Whether I turned my thought within myself or without, the effect was the same — an accession of power and insight — but the interior

self, that had scarce ever asserted its existence, now made me aware of a latent power within me hitherto unsuspected. I am convinced that the most of us do not live even half the life with which the Creator has endowed us.

"We did not seek each others' society. Indeed, we spoke but little; yet I was certain that the interest was mutual. There was very little to base conversation upon — so new an acquaintance did not warrant an interchange of thought — and yet I might have known her forever according to the quality of the thought awakened and directed toward her. As I said before, we conversed but little, yet there seemed within myself, at least, a continual and active conversation going on between herself and me, and upon every conceivable subject attractive to the philosophic mind.

"If you have ever considered it at all, you will realize that mental conversation is vastly different from that spoken. It is not hampered by convention, and embraces with freedom all subjects that may engage the mind. To come in touch with people is something more than a figure of speech. No two human beings can by mere speech hold such communication, because of a lack of frankness for one thing, and because there are not words enough, nor finely enough shaded distinctions, to express the subtleties of thought to the ear. Questions were answered with a clearness and relevancy astounding, and in a few weeks I had gained more insight into the laws of mind and nature than any book could possibly have afforded me — not knowledge to be formulated, but intimations of those deeper processes of thought and life that stir the soul vaguely at times with a sense of mystery. Yet, I repeat, in reality we conversed so little that as time passed on, and when in the nature of things I should have known her better, she seemed even more remote and unapproachable than at first.

"She was, perhaps, twenty-five; blonde, rather full in form, though exquisitely proportioned; and with any complexion or coloring other than that which nature had given her would have seemed voluptuous even in her type of womanhood. But she had skin of singular delicacy and of a blue whiteness which rarely warmed into color. Her eyes were dark, blue, and of a singularly

soft brilliance if her emotions were stirred, but at other times dreamy and like a child's eyes for clearness and candor. Her hands and arms were beautiful, though she seemed unconscious of them or of herself in any way. There was from the first, I noticed, however, a most singular quality of action about her which I could not define to myself, nor explain on any ground, so elusive was the idea, so intangible the action. Virgin though I knew her to be, there was often a look almost maternal on her face, and in the eyes which, in their deep tranquillity yet seemed to regard that which was beyond my vision. Then, too, there was a peculiar motion of the hands, as of leading or caressing, and often with a beautiful illumination of countenance unspeakable.

"'Has she waking dreams?' I would ask myself, and I felt baffled and troubled. Strange thoughts came into my mind, and I pondered and longed to understand, until, one evening, as I saw this oft repeated phenomena of her being, I mentally commanded with agitated intensity, 'Tell me why you act thus! What is it you see and touch?'

"She swiftly turned, walked a few paces and, facing me, looked steadily into my eyes as she held her clasped hands before her appealingly, and said in tense tones: 'Oh, I cannot tell you!'

"It is impossible to express the effect of this speech upon both of us. I sprang from my chair, while a startled look of excitement, surprise, and self-betrayal leapt into her eyes. A wave of color swept her face, then faded, and her attitude softened into one of mute appeal. She was beautiful at that moment."

Burton glanced expressively at McAlpin, whose skepticism had veiled itself in a non-committal attitude of attention. Slightly changing his position he apparently toyed with the portfolio; the sketch he sought was no longer there.

The narrator paused an instant only, and then continued in controlled but still, tense tones:

"'Alice!' I cried, speaking her name as in my thought. "'What does this mean? Is it true — have we in reality been conversing in our thoughts for these weeks? Can it be true?'

"'I — I do not know. I do not understand,' she faltered. 'It is very strange. I do not know what made me speak.'

"She hesitated, and though there was no moisture in her eyes

there was all the effect of tears in their soft brilliance. I was at once bewildered and joyful. I struggled between the opposing desires to comfort or to prove her further; then impulsively tried to touch her hands, but with the utmost sweetness and dignity she denied me, and with perfect composure left the room.

"For many days after that I had no opportunity to speak to her alone. She did not seem to avoid me, but still I gained no advantage. The novelty of the circumstance, and my own suddenly awakened tendency to romance, together with the sense of newly discovered power, were too much for me, and wrought upon my mind to a degree almost beyond control. I longed to be in her presence — to study her. I mentally questioned, demanded or entreated, according to my mood, with all the energy of my nature, but quite in vain — there was no response.

"It was the most distracting and curious experience of my life. Alice seemed to grow more and more abstracted from the externalities of life, though her duties were of the most prosaic and practical nature, and while she seemed forgetful of my presence I believed her alive to every movement and thought."

Here he paused a moment, changing his position, and looked thoughtfully and intently into space. McAlpin observed him closely, noting each change of expression as he continued:

"The more I watched her the stronger grew the jealous instinctive suspicion that she possessed some resource uncomprehended by me, and that I was in a manner shut out. It grew unbearable. In her face there continued the mysterious charm of an impenetrable calm, but it drove me into a state of moody irritation. The time came when we must prepare to move on to another point, and the thought of a change annoyed me. One evening, dissatisfied and restless, I paced up and down the veranda until a late hour. It was in August and a moonless night. I stepped off the porch and on to the grass, presently passing a low French window rather far back toward the end of the house. There was no path there and the window was partly concealed by shrubbery. There was a subdued light and I glanced in.

"Within was Alice, seated in a low easy chair, her face rapt and thoughtful. I deliberately stood and watched her, filled with conflicting and curious emotions. She bent forward, her

expression changing to one of serene joy as she held out her hands in an entreating and caressing way toward a beautiful child of perhaps eighteen months. At first I had not seen it — but now I beheld it distinctly. It seemed to respond, yet hesitate with smiling indecision. Alice, throwing herself on her knees, archly invited the little one to her arms. As it was still reluctant, she partly bared her beautiful bosom, and then, triumphantly and sweetly, clasped the little one to her breast.

"For an instant my brain reeled. Confusion entered my soul, so many were the emotions contending for mastery. My veins swelled and my heart beat madly. I must have moved, and in moving made a noise. Alice glanced upward with a startled face and rose to her feet. *She was alone.* Instinctively she drew her draperies closer about her, moved across the room, and extinguished the light.

"I withdrew under the most intense excitement. All night I tossed and thought, struggling with the strange problem that did not lessen the mystery now that I knew the meaning of that exquisite look that came so often to her face, and the strange caressing motion of those singularly expressive hands. There was no child in the house; I knew that well; and yet —

"Our going could no longer be delayed, but I determined on some pretext to return and to solve this mystery. Very reluctantly I made preparation for departure. I made a sketch of the scene I have described with a purpose in view, should I return according to my intention. Discreet and veiled inquiry elicited but little information, and that little was based upon a rumor only. It was to the effect that the daughter had been married and widowed on the same day through some tragic accident, but how it came about none knew, nor, indeed, if it were true at all, since the story had followed them from some remote place, and she had always borne the family name. Sociability had been discouraged by indifference, and they were considered 'different' from others.

"Naturally, I could not press my inquiries, and dimly I connected the circumstances related with a tragedy that had awakened my interest several years before; but the little I gathered was far from satisfactory.

"After I had been gone a short time I found with joy that mental communication seemed to be reestablished even at a distance. I grew tranquil again.

"It was some time before circumstances permitted my return. Alice was not in the house, and upon some pretext I walked about the grounds with the hope of finding her, and a sure instinct led me to her. Without making my presence known I stood for a moment viewing a picture already familiar to my inner vision, oft repeated in the several weeks just passed. At the point where I stood the cliffs commanded a noble and beautiful view of river, valley and hills, and there sat Alice, her face passive and its expression abstracted. Near her was the form of a little, shadowy child, amusing itself, and now and then she absently threw it a flower or paid it some slight attention, but ever with that peculiar air of abstraction implying deep reverie.

"I said within myself — 'the child is not claiming her whole mind, she is thinking of something — may be of some one else.'

"Compelled to meet her formally, I spoke her name as I advanced. She rose to her feet, blushing a little, but quite composed in manner, and though she professed pleasure at our meeting expressed no surprise. Our conversation was conventional, and presently we turned our steps toward the house. There was now no child to be seen, but the backward glance and a slight motion of the hand told me that to her it was still present.

"Daring all, I asked, 'Where is the little one?'

"She lifted her eyes to mine, paling visibly.

"'What do you mean?' she almost whispered. 'Oh, I do not understand,' she cried, pressing her hands to her temples and regarding me with troubled eyes.

"'Nor do I,' I returned gently, 'but do not be troubled. God has certainly given me the right to sympathize with you, through I know not what mysterious law of our being, and involuntarily I have been made aware of much of your inner life. Trust me, and answer a question. Had I a place in your thoughts when I saw you first — a few moments ago?'

"'Yes, I was wishing you could see —'

"'Well?'

"'I cannot go on.' She paused. Tears fell from her eyes,

and then she began again to speak, though with a downcast gaze.

"'I cannot understand. This experience has been most extraordinary. You have never seemed a stranger and to meet you seemed but the renewal of some past and intimate friendship; and though I could control my outer life, the inner life that I habitually live in thought was strangely intensified after you came to us.'

"'Yes; I think I understand,' I responded, 'but will you tell me what it was that you wished me to see, a few moments ago?'

"'I cannot.'

"'Will this help us to a better understanding?' I asked, taking from my pocket the drawing of which I have spoken and unrolling it before her. She flushed deeply, and then replied with some hesitation as change after change passed over her sensitive face:

"'I see that you do understand, and have seen him. No one else does, or can, though he is always present, and I hear his voice. Sometimes I think others must hear or see him, but I know that they do not. He is mine, and the greatest comfort and pleasure this lonely place can give me. I do not know how he came to be mine. I only know that in my loneliness I longed for him, thought about him, until one day my thought child appeared, very faintly. But gradually it grew stronger and brighter until he became as you now see him.'

"'Is he here — now?'

"'Certainly,' she said in surprise. 'Can you not see him?'

"'Not now. Let us try an experiment. Think of him and of me at the same time with the desiring will that I shall see —'"

There was a slight commotion in the adjoining room, as of some one entering, and the prattle of a baby's voice. The portière was swept aside, revealing a woman of singular and delicate loveliness, holding by the hand a little child.

McAlpin's regret for the interruption was instantly replaced by admiration for womanly beauty,— but Burton drew a quick breath of surprise and instant recognition.

Before him was the living incarnation of the shadowy child of the picture.

The Recruit.*

BY JAMES FRANCIS DWYER.

AN occasional bullet whistled through the thick, hot air and plunged into the sand bank behind which Crosby crouched. He shivered as he listened to the ghostly buzz of the Mauser pellets, and he pondered deeply upon the peculiar antics of his imagination, which persisted in picturing those flying bullets as red atoms tinging the atmosphere through which they ripped a track. This distorted visual image puzzled Crosby. He knew that a bullet was not red, yet, every time he heard the ping of the leaden messengers, his imagination made an attempt to overwhelm the impressions recorded by his eyes. It was a very peculiar manifestation, and, try as he would, he could not prevent his fancy from building up the impression again and again. He took the cartridges from his bandolier, examined the brass shells with their half-exposed bullets with his own eyes, and then became disgusted when imagination pictured a rose-pink trail directly above his head where a slug had gone whistling out over the gray veldt.

All through the long forenoon he had crouched in the little crater on the summit of the sand dune, peering out across the hurrying waters of the river which the rays of a yellow sun stabbed relentlessly. He was perfectly safe, but his teeth chattered as he rolled about in the shallow basin or looked cautiously over the edge of the bank opposite, where a thin blue mist like a Peri's veil hung above the spot where the enemy lay concealed.

Why had he stopped there? Again and again he asked himself the question. At daybreak his company had marched up from the river bank, the great, gray veldt, cool and solemn, stretching invitingly before them. Then came the first scattered fusillade from the opposite bank. Johnstone, Crosby's mate, pitched for-

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ward on his face and lay still. The big Welsh corporal muttered a curse as he swung round towards the river, flung his arms into the air and dropped on his knees. It was terrible. The company had their backs turned to the unseen foe, and Crosby, a raw recruit only five days off the transport that brought him from Plymouth to Table Bay, remembered at that moment a trick played upon him twenty years before when a schoolmate dropped an icicle inside his shirt collar.

Then the sun-tanned officer, keenly alive to the danger, ordered the men to double, and they doubled eagerly. It was their first baptism of fire, and, as there was not a particle of cover available, their safety lay in speed. It was at that moment that Crosby stumbled into the little crater in the sand dune where the noonday sun poured a vertical fire upon him six hours afterwards. He had made an effort to follow his comrades, but, as he struggled out of the pit, three more men fell under the fire of the Boer sharpshooters. Crosby's imagination immediately pointed out the danger to which he, a solitary figure, would be exposed if he attempted to join the rank, and that imagination, which is the parent of cowardice, dragged him back into the little hole over which the enemy's bullets whistled. Five minutes afterwards the company was half a mile away, while on the river bank there were ten dead men and one live one who was virtually a prisoner in a pit four feet deep.

Then Crosby committed a blunder that was a further proof of a coward's soul. Finding that he was safe from the enemy's fire, he threw his rifle over the ridge of his shelter and blazed wildly at the bank opposite. How he regretted that blunder as the morning rolled slowly by! If he had remained quiet, the hidden enemy would not have known that the little pit concealed a foe, but the fusillade that followed informed him that he would be a prisoner while the light lasted. Occasionally he tested the watchfulness of the foe, and now he shuddered as he contemplated the three holes in the pith helmet which had been displayed when his head was not inside it.

He looked up at the blue dome above him, and pictured the bare veldt beneath till he compared his own position with that of the stuffed kingfisher beneath the big glass globe on his aunt's

table in Truro. The kingfisher was really better off. He had passed the last stage of suffering, while Crosby still had a horrible fear of the riflemen on the other side of the swiftly flowing river. As the day rolled slowly by he became nervous and peevish. He asked himself why they stayed. What right had they, twenty bloodthirsty Boers, to sit down and wait patiently till his head appeared above the edge of the pit? It wasn't war — it was murder. He, Algernon Crosby, head teller of the County Bank, whose patriotic soul had been stirred by the words of "The Boys of the Bulldog Breed" and "The Absent-minded Beggar," had never imagined cold-blooded warfare of the type he was then taking a hand in. A Mephistophelian self assured him that he was the absent-minded beggar when he dropped back into the hole instead of taking the chance to rejoin his company, and the self-made sneer did not improve his temper. Again he blazed wildly at the opposite bank, and again the foe displayed excellent marksmanship by dusting the recruit with sand thrown up by burrowing bullets. The imprisoned man felt that the action of twenty men in waiting patiently to murder one was not above criticism.

And then Crosby's imagination would persist in picturing those pellets that came from the opposite bank in a hue that Crosby knew was ridiculous. He was annoyed with his imagination. He was annoyed with the sneering self that pictured him as the living embodiment of Kipling's "Absent-minded Beggar." He was annoyed with the sane, respectable Crosby that reckoned up the interest on thirty-nine pounds nineteen shillings and ninepence three farthings for three and three quarters years at two and five-eighths per cent. quicker than any other clerk in the County Bank. It was really the laziness of that Crosby that had evolved the warlike Crosby that came oversea to capture Piet and Hans and Dirk, who were giving Thomas Atkins a considerable amount of trouble to subdue. Crosby was actually revolting against Crosby. There were in his inmost soul innumerable battles between the three Crosbys that were now at loggerheads, and his nervousness increased. He was not a coward, but he was highly imaginative, and the result is the same. The nicely pierced holes in the white helmet took on the appearance of eyes that studied his pale face and shaking hands. His hands had been white and

well-manicured when he left Truro, but the few days under the South African sun had tinted them the color of a freshly boiled lobster. Crosby cursed his own stupidity, cursed the fat recruiting sergeant who said he would make a fine soldier, cursed the transport that had brought him across the Atlantic, and the sun-tanned officer who had led him into the ambuscade.

The sun's rays came down in a perpendicular shower upon him. He buried his tingling face in the sand and prayed for night. He would creep away in the night — run away across the veldt till he overtook his comrades. He would tell them of his adventure and they would laugh heartily at his cunning.

It was while he was composing a little account for the amusement of those comrades that his eyes, sheltered beneath the helmet, detected a slight movement on the ridge of the sand pit. He jerked his legs back hurriedly when his eyes informed his brain of what they saw, and the sudden movement brought down much sand and also a harmless green snake that had been crawling along the edge. Crosby yelled, and the snake picked itself up and attempted to beat a hasty retreat. Unfortunately, the sand was very dry, and the snake found it a difficult job to climb out. Time after time it rolled to the bottom of the hole, and each time it fell Crosby yelled. He had never met a snake in such close quarters and his nerves were not in a fit state to receive the visit. The snake was disgusted. Four times it made an attempt to scale the bank, and four times it fell back. Then it noticed Crosby's leg, and with serpent wisdom, immediately recognized that the ascent could be made much easier by that route.

Crosby screamed, but the snake was irritable. For just a moment the recruit forgot the foe on the opposite bank as he clawed the edge of the pit and pulled his body out of the hole. Across the river three rifles spoke together, but only Crosby fell back into the hole, — the annoyed snake was sliding away across the veldt, congratulating himself in a snaky way that he had reached the top before Crosby toppled over.

A Random Influence.*

BY BENJAMIN ELLSWORTH FOX.

HALF-WAY down the main street, in fact, the one street, of Winchville, stands the First Church of Christ, Scientist. Its tasteful architecture and wide setting of well-kept grounds give it an air of superiority when compared with the older churches of the place; indeed, it might well grace a more pretentious town and to the passer-by indicate a strong, or perhaps a wealthy, following.

When you are told that the church has less than twenty members, all people in the most moderate circumstances, you are surprised; when you learn that the modern edifice was the gift of Mr. Jabez Winch, who lives in the weather-beaten house next door, you are still more surprised, or would be if you knew Jabez Winch.

Previous to this unsolicited and unexpected gift, Jabez Winch had never been known to give anything to anybody. On the contrary, any one who knows him will tell you that he goes about taking something from every one with whom he comes in contact, and that the town's name grows more appropriate day by day, for Jabez Winch is fast coming to either own or hold mortgages on nearly everything within its limits.

When the bewildered Scientists, who had been given scant room or tolerance by the other denominations of the place, could at last be made to realize that they were in truth to have a church, and that, the gift of Jabez Winch, with gratitude not unmixed with the curiosity consuming the whole town, they made haste to go to him in a body to voice their thanks.

Jabez met them in what was for him a kindly manner, but without enthusiasm; and when some of the more ardent and zealous members warmly demanded that he should lend his

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presence to their meetings, he tartly informed them that when the new church was completed and turned over to them, he should hold no strings on it, and he wished it fully understood that neither should the church hold any on him.

A few days later the people of his own church, the Congregational, where he had been an attendant for half a century, thinking that for some unfathomable reason his stony heart had melted at the eleventh hour, delegated a committee to wait upon him to see if he would give the church a bell, a long-felt want they had never been able to supply. It is safe to say that no member of that unfortunate committee could ever again be induced to approach him on a similar errand.

"Not a penny," he snapped, his bitter glance sweeping the line of petitioners. "I wouldn't hire a man 'at hed t' hev a 'larm-clock t' git him out t' work in th' mornin'; I wouldn't own a dog 'at wouldn't come t' me 'thout bein' whistled at, an' I've got no use fer a set o' dyspeptic Christians 'at needs a bell t' ding-dong 'em t' Sund'y worship."

So the Scientists who had received, the Congregationalists who had been denied, and the town's people not so directly interested, were equally at sea as to his motive. The reason of his giving remained a mystery, and like other mysteries ceased to be the topic of conversation only when all methods of solving it seemed to have been exhausted.

Jabez Winch is an uncle of mine by marriage — a kind of bloodless relation I might say. I do not mention this because I take any special pride in it, but because I think it was through this slight bond of kinship and the fact that he has always seemed to have a kind of fancy for me, that he came to tell me why he gave a church to the Scientists of Winchville. I had called upon him on some matters of business, and these being arranged, more to his satisfaction than to my own I must admit, we went out, in the cool of the afternoon, to smoke on the vine-covered porch. He refused the cigar I offered, and taking from his pocket a pipe which, like his own face, seemed as if carved from some gnarled and seamy root, he tilted back his chair until his head found the shadow of the encircling leaves, his steely eyes resting on the new

church a stone's throw away across garden and lawn. The last rays of the September sun, slanting across the valley, were caught by the arching windows and thrown back, a sheen of glory; the long shadows from the wooded slope in the rear, deepened on a lawn of velvet, and the First Church of Christ, Scientist, stood out in the mellow air a picture in green and gold.

"Kind o' pretty, ain't it," said Jabez, pointing with the stem of his pipe.

"It is, indeed, and you must take a great deal of satisfaction in it," I replied.

"I dunno; sometimes I don't think n'thin' 'bout it fer weeks at a time."

"Do you ever attend the meetings?" I asked, although I felt sure that he did not.

"Nope, ain't never ben inside it sence th' day 'twas finished, when I went through it t' see how bad th' builders 'd skinned me."

"But you are interested in their work?"

"Not in partic'lar. I guess their religion 's all right 'nough, but it's too late in th' day t' change mine, even 'f I thought it wuth while."

"Then I don't see —" I bit my tongue as I realized I was about to ask the question that all Winchville had longed yet feared to ask, for more than two years.

His dry smile flickered an instant behind his pipe.

"You're wonderin' like all th' rest on 'em, ain't ye? Wal, it don't make no diff'rence now, an' I don't mind tellin' ye 'bout it."

I tried not to appear too anxious, as he relit his pipe and packed it down with a heavy thumb.

"Remember 'bout me bein' in that railroad accid'nt?"

"I heard of it at the time, but never knew the particulars."

"Wal, I was drawed on jury dooty down t' Hamilton, an' they kep' me an' 'leven other fools settin' 'round there 'bout three weeks, tryin' t' decide cases 'at wasn't wuth settlin', one way 'r 'nother.

"I got good an' sick of it an' was mighty glad when they turned me loose. I started t' come home on th' C. & L. road. The

C. & L. road, 'fore it was took over by th' big line, was 'bout th' wust managed stretch o' rusty catastrophe 'at ever pervented folks gittin' fr'm one town t' another. They hed accid'nts ev'ry day, an' my day wa'n't no exception. We got 's fur 's Cherry Crick an' struck an open switch. They didn't think no more o' leavin' a switch open on th' C. & L. 'an you would o' leavin' a door open on a hot day.

"Cherry Crick 's a rocky cut, 'bout sixty foot deep, with three-sixteenths inches o' water in it, an' we went clean t' th' bottom.

"I was in th' las' car, but we got t' th' bottom fust and th' other cars an' th' engine piled atop o' us.

"When I got my wits t'gether I found I couldn't move hand 'r foot; I couldn't even yell 'r swear, like some on 'em did, fer there was a seat-cushion jammed down over my face. Now, a cushion's all right 'f it happens t' be on th' right side o' yer head, but when th' back o' yer neck is restin' on th' flange o' a truck wheel, an' yer face is burrowin' into a dusty wad o' plush, full o' Buffalo bugs an' other reg'lar commuters on the C. & L., 't ain't exactly a bed o' roses.

"I must 'a' ben th' kind o' foundation stun o' th' hull wreck, fer they hed t' move an engine an' four cars 'fore they got t' me, an' th' fust thing I seen when they took th' cushion off'm my face was young Doc Slater, lookin' down at me.

"This was lucky fer me, fer Doc was brought up in our town here, an' me an' his father was boys t'gether. Minute Doc seen me he dropped ev'rythin' else an' took hold o' my case. They carried me up on th' bank an' made me 's easy 's they could. I didn't need no doctor t' tell me I was battered up like th' only toy in a family o' eight children. Doc run his hands over me an' shook his head.

"'N'thin' broke, Doc?' I asked.

"'Pretty much ev'rythin' but yer sperit I guess, Uncle Jabe. But we'll pull ye through. It'll take time, though, but I'll stick right to ye,' Doc says.

"They got a amb'lance after a while an' took me up t' Doc's boardin' place an' put me in his room. Doc an' some other fellers looked me over an' Doc said there was a lot o' bone settin' an' other repairs t' make, an' 'at he'd hev t' give me ether.

I wouldn't stand that; I told him I never hed work done fer me when I was away 'r asleep, an' as fer takin' ether it was too late t' do any good; th' C. & L. road ought t' hev furnished that t' th' passengers 'fore they got in th' cars.

"Doc grinned an' said he could stand it 'f I could, an' they went at it.

"They spent th' afternoon settin' bones an' things an' towards night they begun packin' me in plaster. It was a reg'lar mason's contract, an' when they got through I was a solid block o' cement, with my good eye lookin' out o' one end an' a toe 'at seemed t' hev ben lucky stickin' out o' th' other. Then they run guy ropes an' props t' keep me in one place, an' after it was all fixed Doc grinned again an' says:

"'Now, Uncle Jabe, I shall hev t' ask ye t' keep very quiet an' not try t' get out o' bed!'

"'Doc, I says, 'I'm furnishin' ye more practice at one lick 'an ye'd got ord'nary in th' next six years.'

"What I consider th' wust featur' o' th' hull thing was th' fact 'at it happened near th' town where my wife's sister Sary lives, an' th' second day she was there t' see me. I hedn't seen her fer a good many years, an' hoped I shouldn't fer a good many more. To meet Sary 's an accid'nt in itself an' a bad one at that. Sary hes a new religion 'bout ev'ry year, an' at this time Christian Science happened t' be th' unlucky one. She told me 'at if I hedn't ben open t' sin I wouldn't 'a' ben injured, an' I told her 'at if th' switch hedn't ben open on the C. & L. I guessed I should 'a' ben enj'yin' my usual good health, sin an' all.

"She told me she wasn't as yit strong 'nough in th' faith t' help me much but she'd send me a man in a few days who'd hev me out o' that bed an' on my way home in fifteen minutes. They ain't no use talkin' t' Sary, so I jest cuddled down in my cement an' let her go on till she got tired. She went away tellin' me th' healer, 'r whatever they call him, would see me in a few days.

"After she'd gone I got t' thinkin' 'bout it, an' it made me mad. Natur does some wonderful things, an' knittin' a brok'n bone 's one on 'em, but I know it takes time, an' they ain't no sleight-o'-hand work 'bout it. When I was in Hamilton I went t'

a show one night an' seen a feller doin' sleight-o'-hand tricks. He took a glass vase with nothin' in it —you could see right through it. Then he waved his hand over it a few times an' th' nicest bunch o' big red roses growed out o' it in a minute. It was well done, an' I liked t' see it, but I know roses don't grow that way. Long time ago my wife got some little slips o' rose bushes an' set 'em out an' when they got bigger she worked 'round 'em ev'ry day. She'd spend a couple o' hours ev'ry mornin' pickin' bugs off'n 'em an' a couple o' more pickin' thorns out o' her thumbs, an' then there wasn't a bud showed on 'em fer two or three years.

"If ye could grow roses 'r knit bones in a minute 't would upset the hull world. The hull universe would be run on the same principle as th' C. & L. road an' it would be a pretty keerless place to live in, jedgin' fr'm my experience. More I thought 'bout it, seemed t' me I'd better be prepared t' explain t' that healer what a big contract he'd got t' cover in fifteen minutes.

"I got Doc t' let me take a big medical book 'at hed drawin's o' th' bone system in it. Then I hed him mark a cross on th' bones 'at was broke, with a double one fer compound fractur's, an' I hed him put th' book up on a music holder where I could git it in line with my eye. Doc didn't know what I was up to, but he said it would help t' while th' time away.

"Th' nurse was a good natur'd gal an' she'd turn the pages when I wanted 'em. It's surprisin' how little a man knows 'bout his own body, 'at he's hed charge of fer seventy years. I found there's more bones in one o' yer feet 'an there is in a shad, an' in my case most on 'em was broke. I worked up one side an' crossed over at my neck, follerin' th' book, an' kind o' checkin' 'em off with my eye. Th' next day I took th' other side, an' th' third day I took up my head. I learned th' names o' a good many o' th' most necessary bones, an' queer names they are too.

"I was gittin' th' inventory pretty well closed up, when one mornin' th' nurse told me there was a gentleman down stairs 'at was very anxious t' see me. She asked me if I felt well 'nough t' see him an' I told her t' bring him up. I was jest lookin' over th' catalog list o' neck bones when th' door opened an' a spruce dressed feller with a smile 'at looked like he'd ben practicin' on it, come over t' me an' held out his hand.

"'Good mornin', Mr. Winch,' he says, 'You're lookin' pretty well this mornin'.'

"'Sorry I can't shake with ye, Perfesser,' I says, 'but my right wrist 's broke an' my left hand looked like a lamb-chop last time I seen it.'

"'Oh, well, it might be a good deal wuss,' he says in a kind o' cheery way.

"'Yes,' I says, 'I've got one good eye an' a toe t' begin again on, anyway.'

"He looked kind o' sour at that, an' I started in t' tell my story, an' if I do say it, I done it thorough. I got kind o' tired after I'd gone up one side an' took up th' messy section 'round my shoulder an' collar bone. He looked tired too, an' I told him I guessed we'd better leave th' rest fer another day. He went away 'thout his smile, an' said he'd call again when I was in a better frame o' mind.

"He hedn't more an' shet th' door when Doc come tearin' in.

"'Can't I leave this house an hour 'thout somebody comin' in t' bother you! That woman th' other day was 'nough t' give a hull hospital a relapse; an' now it's this man. Who give him permission t' see you?' Doc says, ugly like.

"'I told 'em t' send him up,' says I.

"'Wal, I hope ye know 'nough not t' come t' any settlement with him,' Doc says.

"'Settle nothin', I says. 'I didn't order him t' come, an' he ain't helped me none. I guess if I settle with you, it 'll be 'bout all I c'n stand.'

"Doc stared at me 's if he didn't know what I was talkin' 'bout.

"'What 'd he say t' ye?' Doc asked, pretty short.

"'He didn't say much. He was real cheerful at fust. I guess he means well 'nough,' I says.

"'Oh, he does, does he,' Doc says, kind o' sarcastic. 'An' what d' ye tell him?'

"'I told him th' name o' ev'ry bone an' j'int 'at was damaged on my right side fr'm toe t' neck, an' t'morrer I'm goin' over th' left side with him; my wife's sister Sary told me he could cure me in fifteen minutes an' I wanted t' let him see what a busy time he'd hev after he'd started in,' I says.

"Doc looked at me hard again, then his face got red an' puffed out like some folks looks when ye don't know whether they're goin' t' laff 'r cry. Then he fell on a sofy an' burrowed his face in a piller. His foot struck a little stan'-table an' tilted it over 'gainst th' wall, an when he looked up an' seen it, he give it 'nother kick an' sent it clean over, an' then dug his face in th' piller again. Then he guggled an' roared an' rolled fer 'bout five minutes.

"'Wal,' I says, 'mebbe after you've got over that fit, ye'll tell me what brought it on.'

"He come over t' th' bed after a while, wipin' th' tears an' hair out o' his eyes.

"'Uncle Jabe,' he says, soon's he could talk, 'You handled him all right. I couldn't 'a' done better myself, but he wasn't a Christian Scientist — 'r at least he don't claim t' be.'

"'Who'n thunderation is he, then?' I says, gittin' a little snappy myself.

"'He's th' claim agent of th' C. & L. road, an' he come t' see how little money you'd be willin' t' take fr'm th' comp'ny fer yer inj'ries,' Doc says, gittin' ready t' laff again.

"'Keep right on with th' program, an' I'll hev a talk with him myself,' Doc says.

"He didn't come back th' next day, but he did a few days later. He'd got back his smile again an' told me 'at of'n times an accid'nt, like th' one happened me, was the best thing in th' world fer a man. He said th' long rest I'd hev an' th' change of feed an' scenes would prob'ly add years t' my life an' some day I'd look back thankf'ly at it.

"He hed th' most cheerful way o' lookin' at things I ever seen, but Doc hed a long talk with him after that an' he didn't look so cheerful when he went away.

"'Uncle Jabe,' Doc says, later in th' day, 'I think 'tween us we're handlin' this thing pretty well. You're goin' t' git a nice sum o' money out o' th' comp'ny. Things is comin' jest right. It seems th' stockholders o' th' C. & L. wants th' big line t' take their road over, an' th' deal won't go through unless th' C. & L. c'n settle all outstandin' claims like yours, 'fore th' fust o' th' month. I told th' agent you was a man o' wide business interests

an' t' be confined t' yer bed fer three 'r four months meant an enormous loss t' ye, not t' speak o' th' shock an' pain an' th' years 'fore ye'd be yerself again.'

"The next day th' agent come again, an' after he'd gone Doc told me th' amount th' road was willin' t' give me, an' said 'f I wasn't satisfied I could carry it t' the court.

"What they offered scared me blue, an' it would you 'f I told ye. I've earned money all kinds o' ways, but this seemed like blood money, an' I told Doc so. I told him 'at if th' claim agent hed agreed t' pay my doctor's bills th' fust day he come, I'd hev signed off there an' then an' thought I was doin' pretty well.

"That made Doc mad.

"'Settle fer yer doctor's bills, ye old lunitic!' he yelled. 'Ain't it wuth nothin' bein' pitched inter Cherry Crick with a train o' cars atop o' ye, an' bein' took out like a piece o' boneless codfish? Settle fer yer doctor's bills! It's a good thing ye took that claim agent fer a Christian Scientist. Christian Science hes saved ye a whole lot o' money.'

"'Wal, I'd feel like a thief takin' all that money fer jest layin' here. I'll keep 'nough t' pay my bills out o' it, an' give th' rest to start a hospit'l 'r an orphuns' home. Seems t' me them kind o' things are needed 'long this line o' road,' I says.

"'Why don't ye give part o' it t' th' Christian Scientists?' Doc asked, all o' a sudden, an' lookin' kind o' foolish.

"'Ye don't mean to tell me yer're mixed up in that business too?' I says.

"'Not d'rectly, but I've got some friends over in our old town who are, an' your old hide-bound neighbors there treats 'em 's if they was criminals an' won't give 'em a chance t' live. I don't know much 'bout Christian Science, but it seems t' make folks cheerful an' human, an' I'd like t' see 'em hev th' best church in Winchville, jest out o' spite, if nothin' more. But I ain't tellin' ye what t' do with yer money,' Doc says, walkin' over an' lookin' out o' th' winder.

"'I s'pose that's one on 'em, that gal I see ye walkin' with 'bout ev'ry Sund'y. She looks like a good Christian, an' a pretty one, too. An' I s'pose you furnish th' Science part o' th' combination.'

"'I s'pose so,' Doc says, lookin' s' much like a fool 'at I wondered how th' state ever give him a license t' handle cough-syrup.

"I settled back an' thought it over. What Doc said was true. We hev got some th' narrerest-minded, longest-faced, shortest-souled folks in this town 'at ever walked 'tween gate posts. I shet my eyes an' it seemed jest 's if I could see how they'd look when they heard th' Christian Scientists was goin' t' hev th' best church in town. Seemed 's if I could see 'em all goin' by me in a kind o' persession an' ev'ry face in th' line looked sourer 'an th' one head o' it. Way down towards th' end I could see old Deak Hoskins, an' his face looked jest like a pickled cucumber, one 'at ye dig out o' th' bottom o' th' bar'l 'long towards Spring. That was too much fer me an' I laffed right out, brok'n ribs an' all.

"'By hominy, Doc, I'll do it,' I says. 'An' I'll throw in th' lot next t' my house, an' it's th' best site in town 'f I do say it, but ye'll hev to swear not t' tell why I'm doin' it. That's too much of a joke on me.'

"'It'll be more 'an a joke on me,' Doc says. 'Christian Science an' my business ain't s'posed t' go hand in hand. You're th' one 'at has t' swear not t' tell. If ye really want t' do this, I'll turn th' hull matter over t' a friend o' mine who's an architect an' a business man 's well. By the time you're ready t' go home we'll hev a set o' plans ready fer th' prettiest church in th' county, one 'at 'll be a credit to you an' th' town. An' it won't take all yer money neither.'

"'Set th' ball rollin', Doc,' I says. 'Th' quicker ye let me see how that church 's goin' t' look on my lot, an' how I'm goin' t' look after I git out o' this stun-quarry, th' better I'll like it.'

"'Wal, it all come out jest 's we planned. When Doc's friend writ th' Scientists 'at I was goin' t' give 'em a church they wouldn't b'lieve it. He writ 'em again an' they wouldn't b'lieve it then. They'd go by my house lookin' at it like a dog goin' by a butcher-shop. Th' man hed t' come over an' see 'em 'fore they'd take any stock in th' story, but after they made sure, they did thank me han'some. But I wish ye could seen th' other people. They went by with their sour faces jest 's I seemed t' see 'em when I

was lyin' in Doc's room with my eyes shut, an' when I seen old Deak Hoskins comin', jest 's I did then, I was on crutches, but I don't believe I'll ever hev s' much fun on wings.

"Then th' churches all sent committees t' see 'f I wouldn't give 'em new bells an' new carpets an' most ev'rythin' but new ministers. I wouldn't give 'em nothin', 'r explain nothin' 'bout it, an' I've hed fun watchin' 'em ever sence.

"But it don't matter now; Doc's married th' gal an' they live jest below here. She's a great worker in th' church, but Doc never goes. He comes over an' smokes with me durin' services. He says he thinks me an' him better be kind o' silent partners in th' business."

Jabez rose and knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Then you never saw the real Christian Scientist?" I asked.

"Nope. I never knew whether Sary changed her religion 'fore she hed time t' find him, 'r whether he heard 'bout my case an' thought it was too heavy fer him. Anyway, he never showed up."

"Then you don't know whether he could have helped you or not?"

"He couldn't 'a' helped me any," said Jabez decidedly. "If he could, th' railroads 'd hev 'em, an' they could name their own saleries. Fact is," — here he turned to answer the call to supper that came through the open window — "fact is, while th' railroads prob'ly don't rec'nize it, an' th' Scientists, o' course, wouldn't admit it, th' nearest thing to what they claim fer a practical workin' Christian Scientist t'day, is a railroad claim agent."